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Thesis

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Thesis

SOME RECENT THEORIES OF A FINITE GOD

Submitted by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Cont'd)

Some Recent Theories of a Finite God.

Introduction.

Statement of Subject and its Delimitation.

The topic for discussion in this thesis is to be "Some Recent Theories of a Finite God." We will not enter into a survey of historic conceptions of God for that is a vast field in itself. However, it will be necessary to state briefly two current theories of an infinite God in order that we may understand what we are limiting. The primary purpose of this thesis will not be to prove the existence of God, as the thesis that there is a spiritual reality of some sort which we call "God" is presupposed. My purpose is to discover what some twentieth century writers believe about God, and in the light of their ideas I shall present my own theory. Since it is quite generally agreed that there may be, and undoubtedly is, knowledge which no one has yet discovered, we do not claim final authority for any of these theories. Each theory is one man's attempt to explain reality in the light of all truth. But, as each of these men sees his reality a little differently, I dare to presume that I, too, have a right to think just a little differently. My desire is to interpret each man as nearly as possible as he himself believes. Having done this I reserve the right to present my criticism of his belief.

Reasons for the Choice of Subject.

My reasons for choosing the subject, "Some Recent Theories of a Finite God", were essentially personal. I had been having trouble with my own idea of God. I grew up believing that God was all-powerful and all-good. But as I realized the slow progress of good; the seeming victory of evil in the face of honest effort toward good and implicit faith that God would lead; and as I saw suffering on the part of those who had done nothing to bring it about, I was forced to question. With Job I refused to give up the goodness of God. Yet I saw no other way unless God became a mere puppet in the hands of the universe. Therefore, I turned to those who, in recent years, have faced the same problem, to see if their solutions would help me. I have not fully accepted any one theory. But the study has cleared my thinking and lifted me out of the vicious state I had been in where I gave God one of three alternatives. I was convinced that he was not both all-powerful and all-good. Then he must be (1) all-powerful and not good (which I could not believe); or (2) he was good but caught in the clutches of a ruthless universe which he could not control (also not satisfactory); or else (3) he did not exist at all. I was almost ready to believe the last. Then, as I read, I came to see that there are other ways out of the dilemma. The way that I have chosen I shall describe later. But I have put this study into a thesis because I believe that a study which has helped me may also help others, even though they do not come to my conclusions.

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Joel, "Does Reason Tend to a Finite God", were essentially [illegible]. I had been having trouble with my own idea of God. I kept up believing that God was all-powerful and all-good. But as I analized the slow growth of good, the seeming victory of evil in the face of human effort coupled with and logical fact that God could lead and as I saw particular on the part of those who had done nothing to bring it about, I was forced to question. With Job I refused to give up the goodness of God. Yet I saw no other way unless God became a mere puppet in the hands of the universe. Therefore, I turned to other sciences, in search for the same problem, to see if their solutions would help me. I have not fully accepted any one theory. But the study has cleared my thinking and lifted me out of the chaotic state I had been in when I gave God one of three alternatives. I was convinced that he was not both all-powerful and all-good. Then he must be (1) all-powerful and not good (which I could not believe); or (2) he was good but compare in the absolutes of a nothing universe which he could but control (also not satisfactory); or else (3) he did not exist at all. I was almost ready to believe the last. Then, as I read, I came to see that there are other ways out of the dilemma. The way that I have chosen I shall describe later. But I have put this study into a single sentence I believe that a study which has helped me may also help others, even though they do not come to my conclusions.

Definition of Terms.

Before presenting any theories it is necessary to know just what we mean by the different terms. Webster defines "infinite" as "without limit in power, capacity, knowledge, or excellence; boundless; immeasurably or inconceivably great; all-embracing; perfect." In this study we shall consider the infinite not in terms of the Absolute, but as possessing no limitation save self limitation. In all of the theories of a finite God we find God limited not only by his own nature, but by something outside of himself.

Statements of the Infinite.

A. Joyce.

In my statements concerning the infinite I have been very brief for that is merely background. I have taken two theories of an infinite God for this purpose. Joyce, a modern scholastic, sees God as first cause who has created all else; that is, the universe exists only through God, but he could and did exist without the Universe. Having created the universe God is not limited by it. Thus, as well as being first cause God is infinite, and if infinite, i.e. according to Joyce, embracing all being, then timeless and immutable. As the unmoved Mover, the Infinite Creator of the finite, God is seen to have all the qualities of perfection which are found in his universe. But these qualities are so infinitely perfect in him as compared with their finite imperfection that they can scarcely be considered as the same at all. Though our finiteness makes it impossible to conceive of God in any but finite terms, we must always be aware of the limitations of our finite concepts.

Infinities of Joyce. Before proceeding to Berkeley it is necessary to know just what he means by the different terms. Webster defines "infinite" as "without limit in power, capacity, knowledge, or excellence; unbounded; immeasurably or incomprehensibly great; all-embracing; perfect." In this study we shall consider the infinite not in terms of the absolute, but as synonym, no limitation save self limitation. In all of the theories of infinite God we find God limited not only by his own nature, but by something outside of himself.

Attributes of the Infinite. In my statements concerning the infinite I have been very brief for that is nearly impossible. I have taken two theories of an infinite God for this purpose. Joyce, a modern scholastic, says God as first cause has created all else; that is, the universe exists only through God, but he could and did exist without the universe. Having created the universe God is not limited by it. Thus, we call the first cause God is infinite, and if infinite, according to Joyce, embracing all being, then eternal and immutable. As the unmoved Mover, the infinite Creator of the finite, God is seen to have all the qualities of perfection which are found in this universe. But these qualities are so infinitely perfect in him as compared with their finite imperfection that they can scarcely be considered as the same at all. Though our finiteness makes it impossible to conceive of God in any not finite terms, we must always be aware of the limitations of our finite concepts.

"The Divine attributes, many though they be, all signify one and the same Supreme Perfection in whom there is no distinction; but by reason of the infinity of that Perfection, the human mind can only represent it under a diversity of aspects and by meansof concepts differing from one another." *

The infinite, self-existent Being is clearly omnipotent. Joyce defines omnipotence as power to do anything not self-contradictory. Anything self-contradictory would be meaningless and could not limit the infinite in any true sense. The matter of reconciling this omnipotent, perfect Being with evil becomes a problem.

Joyce accounts for physical evil on the basis of our limited understanding of God's purposes and means of attaining his ends. Spiritual evil or sin is due to God's gift of human free-will. However, this Prime Knower and Mover knows in advance each act of his free-agent creations and these acts cannot take place unless he permits them. There thus arises the problem of how we can have free will and still be limited by what God permits, unless God permits anything we choose. And if he permits it, is he not accountable for it? That God may not be non-moral Joyce says, "In the case of God's created agents choosing wrong he can use that choice to bring about some good result." We simply have to believe that "all this apparent frustration has its place in a providential scheme." **

* Joyce, G.H.; "Natural Theology" p. 246-7
** Ibid. p. 394.

Thus Joyce presents to us a God infinite, eternal, unchanging, omnipotent, and still somehow moral, but not very intimately personal.

Statements of the Infinite.
B. Alexander.

Alexander, too, claims infinity for God, but it is the infinitude of a boundless ideal. God is not creator. Our conception of deity is variable, but deity itself is not. On any level of existence deity is the next step higher. It is something which we can experience, but not wholly appreciate because it is higher than we are. But this growing conception of deity is not God. The reality is always the same and only our conceptions change. The universe is real, existing in space-time. Deity is, for any level, the ideal just ahead. God is "the universe as tending toward deity."* God is not mere spirit. The body of God, his past content, is the whole growing universe, and his mind is deity, the step ahead. His body and mind are both infinite. Alexander does not believe in a personal God. "God's divinity is not a higher humanity, but something different in kind."** Omnipotence, omniscience, goodness, eternity are simply finite terms seeking to express the infinite. God as the "whole universe with a nisus to deity," *** becomes a sort of objectified ideal. It is not an attainment, but a possibility. When the ideal is attained it ceases to be infinite. But this ideal is more real than the actual becoming. Since he is not the creator, evil is not God's creation, but as a fact of the universe it does become a part of God with which He must contend and which He must try to transform into good.

* Alexander-Space, Time and Deity. Vol.1-p.361.
** Ibid. p.383.
*** Ibid. p.362.

Since God is not personal we need not worry about his morality, simply about his purpose. Alexander's God, does not seem to me pure pantheism because He is more than the universe, the universe ever moving to something higher. God is infinite, but Space-Time is the ultimate reality. It is not clear to me just how Alexander reconciles this seeming paradox, but that is his position.

Thus we find God the infinite personal creator who has granted free will and yet is neither limited by it nor rendered non-moral by evil, and God as the infinite creature, who is not the creator nor the universe itself, but a sort of objectified ideal always a step ahead of any level we may reach and therefore always drawing us onward.

Order of Procedure.

As I consider the finite conceptions, I find that McConnell and Rashdall follow a logic similar to Joyce's. But the other theories which I shall present have more in common with Alexander's reasoning. My choice of order has been more or less arbitrary, but I have tried to present the theories in the order in which they move from the infinite and become more and more finite. Since I hardly know where to classify Mr. Well's conception I have put him last.

My choice of the men whose ideas I shall present has been frankly arbitrary. I have sought to present varied views. To do this I have chosen from among the men who have been brought to my attention on the basis of their philosophical position and the availability of material on my subject.

Chapter I

McConnell's Theory--The Christlike God.

Of all the theories which I shall consider Mr. McConnell's comes nearest to that of modern scholasticism. He himself is not willing to call his God finite.* Yet the idea of a limited infinite is contradictory. We said that the infinite was bound only by self-limitation. McConnell admits that God is limited by man's free will, but since man is God's creation, I suppose he considers man a self-limitation. However, I agree with Rashdall that, after He has created other persons, those persons are objective to God, and as they limit him he becomes finite. However, because he is so close to Joyce in his point of view we will consider him first.

God is Personal.

The first fundamental fact about God, according to McConnell, is that he is a moral person. Jesus is the supreme creation of the world. It is impossible to account for him by an impersonal universe. Many people give up a personal God rather than make Him responsible for evil, thus involving him in moral difficulties. But McConnell contends that "the concrete and personal are morally more worthy than the abstract and impersonal."** He says it is not so hard to account for evil on the basis of a personal God as it is to account for good, personal good, without a personal God.

* McConnell, F.J.; "Is God Limited?" pp. 106-9. He discusses and condemns the pluralist conception of a finite God.

** McConnell, F.J.; "The Christlike God." p. 49.

"The essential Christian belief is that God is like unto Christ."* All of the characteristics applied to God must thus be judged on whether or not they could belong to a moral being such as Christ was. When we thus apply personality to God, however, we are not giving him an anthropomorphic body. "When we speak of a personal God we mean self-consciousness and self-direction."** "Christianity is more concerned with the absolutely moral God than with metaphysical absolutism." ***

God is Creator.

This personal God is the Creator. "The universe of matter is God's continuous deed," **** and, being so, it cannot be bigger, stronger, wiser, nor better than he is. In the light of modern science, matter is "invisible centers of force reporting themselves to us spatially... For the theist the forces are the continuously put forth energies of God...It follows that, so far as the world of matter is concerned, apart from any question as to human freedom, there is no way of freeing God from responsibility for physical evil." **** How God can thus be held responsible and still be good will be considered later. Suffice it here to say that God has made his universe according to certain laws and is now limited by them. If God were apt at any moment to break all laws and do as he pleased all sense of security in the universe would be lost. "If self-realization in an unlimited Doer leads to a crazy universe, we forthwith seek for a limited God...If we are to think of a Divine Being at all, we must think of him as under some sort of limitation." *****

* McConnell; Op. Cit. p.55.
** McConnell; "Is God Limited?" p. 243.
*** Ibid. p. 17.
**** Ibid. P. 58.
***** Ibid. p. 20.

Yet we must not, therefore, consider God as tied up in a bag of his own making which he himself tied. He did not make the world and its laws and then discover that things got beyond him so that the only way to redeem the world was to set aside law occasionally and act for himself. "The possibility of miracle as departure from the accustomed method is hardly open to doubt by believers in the God of Christianity. The actuality of miracle, as the seizure of the higher powers of nature by the higher spiritual personalities, is likewise not open to serious doubt." * God is thus limited but not fettered by his universe.

But God is not only the creator of the universe but of human beings with the possibility of free will; that is, with "the power to choose among physical forces already existing, the human choice being simply the occasion on which one energy or another, already existing or potential is directed into one channel or another." ** "There is no use in talking about the Christlikeness of God unless God has and can bestow freedom... Freedom is a gift from God and the giver of the gift shares with the receivers the consequences of the gift." *** Human free agents may act in a way which God would not choose, but God is indirectly responsible because he created the beings with this possibility. Thus God is not only responsible for the evil in the physical universe, but in the realm of human free will. Otherwise God is not moral. An intelligent being who created a world of human beings without counting the cost (in terms of evil choices) would not be Christlike.

* McConnell, "The Christlike God" p. 171.
** Ibid. p. 156.
*** Ibid. pp. 159-61.

"The risks involved in the creation of a human race (with free-will to choose between or among laws) we have no means of knowing, but we do not believe that can be assumed without knowledge enough and power enough and love enough, to prevent disaster, if God is to be like Christ." *

Knowledge of God

The knowledge of a moral God now becomes important. McConnell says that God's knowledge is full and complete. He must know himself and his universe. "God acts in the full light of wisdom--his act the full expression of intelligence, his act a unified whole."** This "full knowledge of the Divine must rise out of the full moral life." *** McConnell admits of only two limitations to God's knowledge. He cannot know evil in the sense of having shared in it, but he can and must know sympathy for the soul who has experienced evil. The other limitation of God's lies in man's free will. God, being the creator of laws, knows what man's choices are limited to, but we can easily admit that God does not know in advance which choice a man will make. Even this limitation of knowledge is questionable as God may know, from his knowledge of the man's nature and the choices which lie before him, which way he will choose, without himself conditioning that choice.

Power of God

"The theists have held fast to divine benevolence, mostly at the cost of divine omnipotence, though their surrenders have not been considerable." ****

* McConnell; Op. Cit. p. 163.
** Ibid. p. 107.
*** Ibid. p. 109.
**** Ibid. p. 87.

"The risks involved in the creation of a human being (with free-
will to choose between good and evil) are bound to become great, of
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* McConnell, op. cit., p. 180.
** Ibid., p. 200.
*** Ibid., p. 214.
**** Ibid., p. 97.

That is to say, if the goodness of God demands that he allow men to choose rather than that he dictate their acts to them, mankind will choose goodness rather than unlimited power. If man must choose between a God with a power to change the universe at his slightest whim, and a good God who is bound to be consistent, he will choose the latter. "We can see that God can do all things except those which his own rational and moral character makes impossible, and those which are turned over to the sphere of the freedom of a free man's choice, the human freedom itself being the grant of the Creator and moving within a range of activities where the will of God must necessarily be a cooperating factor." * God's creatorship holds him responsible even where his power is limited, for a wise and moral being would not create a thing the moral consequences of which he could not see. "All we can ask is that in those phases of activity which we cannot understand, God acts not out of wantonness or sportiveness, but out of a nature rational and moral throughout." **

Love of God — God loves men enough to suffer over their sins. We cannot excape from this if we are to think of God as Christlike. Love which can be most deeply grieved by the shortcomings of the one or ones beloved is indeed great love. ***

Unity and Unchangeableness — Absolute metaphysical unity would demand that there be no free souls save the one. But McConnell believes that it is better to have a conception of God which lacks metaphysical unity than to keep metaphysical

* McConnell, Op. Cit. p.120.
** McConnell, "The Christlike God." p. 102.
*** McConnell, "Is God Limited?" ch. XXIII.

unity at the cost of moral unity. "Such a loss of metaphysical unity as the free creation of finite wills involves, we shall have to yield to if we are to preserve the moral unity of the divine---Better have God struggling to get evil out of men's lives than struggling to get it out of his own." *

As God must be morally one so he must be morally unchanging. This does not mean that God does not know change. "Changes which men know have a mighty meaning for God." ** The main call for unchangeableness is moral, a fixity of moral purpose. "I think we do not get help from a morally developing God, but a God whose own life is forever at the full might well order the changes in the system in which we live." *** Yet this very sameness of moral purposes calls for a difference in the way God treats men. If he gave exactly the same treatment to all men under all conditions he would be metaphysically immutable, perhaps, but he could not be said to have a moral purpose at all. "It seems to me possible to believe in a God above change, so far as his own moral development is concerned, and who yet knows what change means for men." ****

Immeanence and Transcendence of God

We have stated in an earlier section that the universe is "God's continuous deed," If God had created the world and then left it to run as it wished, he would have transferred his responsibility and thus not be moral. If he is moral then he is immanent in his creation, in everything except that he does not himself will the choices of free men. "The avowal that God is in a manner in all things

* McConnell; "The Christlike God." pp. 68-69.
** Ibid. p. 81.
*** Ibid. p. 88.
**** Ibid. p. 88.

may be accompanied by a frank profession of ignorance as to how he is in this or that particular fact." * God is causally in all things alike, but when we come to meaning we find much more of God in some things than in others. For example, "God is in Christ as he is not elsewhere--as revelation of spirit and character."** Again, to say that God is in all things is not to say that everything is as God would have it be. "God is working everywhere for redemption among men who have made wrong choices." ***

This brings us to the link whereby God is also transcendent. God is in all things yet beyond them. He is the creator yet is not satisfied with his creation. We say that he is limited by them yet he is greater than they. This sounds paradoxical yet it is so. Lincoln was a thoroughgoing democrat yet at times he found it necessary to be an extreme autocrat in order to save his ideal of democracy. So God is in everything yet by his very morality rises above all that he is in.

God, Freedom, and Responsibility

We cannot get away from the presence of evil in the physical universe. If God is creator we must give him responsibility for this evil. Much of this apparent evil is in the very nature of things and is a part of natural law. Law is a statement of the methods by which an agent acts. "Everywhere in our limited world the mastery of law and obedience to it are the path to the largest

* Op. Cit. p. 142.
** Ibid. p. 135.
*** Ibid. p. 139.

liberty. We are at least in line with our own experience in suggesting that God may find his liberty through the law which expresses his wisdom." *[a] "We do not care for a creator who shows his freedom from limitation by trying now one plan and now another. We like to think of him as shut up to the best plan. ... The best always binds the free chooser. The most free of beings has no choice when confronted by the best. Having chosen there is no relief from the necessity of going on through. ... We assume that we are dealing with a responsible God who will be satisfied only with the best and then will carry the best through." **[a] However, much that we see leads us to wonder that a powerful and good God would be able to find no better way to attain his purpose. The moral requirement is that the cost itself shall be justifiable. "If we are to think of God as the Christian God, the launching of a race of human beings was not a foolhardy outburst of irresponsible good-humor, afterward confronting an insoluble situation brought about by the misuse of freedom. That conception is not an honor to God ...The bearing of the cross ... is not a last minute expedient, but an essential, inherent in the divine putting forth of the powers that are to win men." *

Whenever man's wrong acts are the result of hereditary or other influences which he could not possibly help, the responsibility is not his, it rests upon the system that goes back to God. But "the responsibility can best be lodged with God if we sincerely think of him as Christlike." ** God's re-

* McConnell, "The Christlike God", p. 169.
** Ibid.
*[a] McConnell, "Is God Limited?" P. 78.
**[a] Ibid, pp. 65-66

sponsibility is to bring about good from his creation. But he cannot do this by turning men, his free-agents, into puppets. His powers in the development of men are those of "education of mind and heart and will." It is thus that the wise, powerful, and moral God will bring about his ends.

Critical Appraisal

McConnell has definitely limited God more than Joyce has. He has given up metaphysical immutability and God's fore-knowledge of man's free acts. But the difference is more of spirit than of specific characteristics which differ. God, as McConnell interprets him is knowable, whereas Joyce's idea is more abstract to me.

My chief point of difference with McConnell, I believe, lies in the field of God's power. For McConnell God knows change only from the time point of view, but not from the point of view of development in any line. He limits God's power only by his creations, both physical and mental. I agree with McConnell that God's moral purpose is unchanging. But if we are to attain what McConnell believes to be God's purpose--the redemption of the world--I can see no way out save by increase of God's power. Surely, if God could educate the mind and heart and will in a generation he would do so and not take generations, and I cannot help believing that if God's power had been as complete as his goodness, he could have made a physical universe with less pain and suffering. He says that as a perfectly free Being God, when confronted with the best could not choose other than the best. But what hope is there for perfection if the best is as full of evil as is the physical universe? I like his insistence that God, who is Christlike,

must be trusted to bring good out of evil. But I am not satisfied to say that a responsible God can be trusted to account for the Mississippi flood, if his power when he created laws, was unlimited. I must also believe that could he have arranged a way to bring about his ideal for the world without such catastrophes he would have done so. It does not take away from, but rather adds to, my conception of God's morality to believe that his power and knowledge of how to bring about his ideal are growing. Without such a belief I can see a way out for human sins, but not an end to suffering in the physical world. McConnell asks, Is not a will activity forever at the full, forever acting out the moral ideal, more worthy than one that had to struggle to perfection? To this I answer in the affirmative but ask in return if power and knowledge cannot be limited without a limiting of moral ideal.

Chapter II

Rashdall's Theory -- God, the Personal Ideal

Rashdall's conception is very similar to McConnell's except that he has not laid the definite stress on Christlikeness. Rashdall's Theory grows out of his idealist assumptions and is not based on any particular person. Otherwise the chief difference is that Rashdall permits the limitation of God's power more than McConnell does.

Idealist Assumptions

As a basis for his theory of God Rashdall assumes the validity of the belief that there is no such thing as matter apart from mind. Things exist for mind, not for themselves. The result of this position is that there must be minds to know things. But since no single human mind ever knows all things at any one time there must be a Supreme Mind which we call God. "My own reason, making inferences from my own experience, assures me that the world was when I was not -- when no human or sub-human ancestor of mine was there to contemplate the molten planet or the contracting nebula. I cannot understand my present experience without making that assumption. There must then have been a consciousness for which the world always existed. ... Idealism then proves the existence of a "Universal Thinker"." * In his "Philosophy of Religion" Mr. Rashdall states this same position. "Matter cannot intelligibly be supposed to exist apart from mind: and yet it clearly does not exist merely for <u>our</u> minds. If the whole is to exist at all there must be some one mind which knows the whole. ... ... We cannot explain the world

* Sturt, Ed., "Personal Idealism" Ch. VIII, p. 376.

without the supposition of one universal mind in which and for which all so-called material things exist and always have existed." *

God is Personal

Rashdall, however, refuses to think of God as an abstract Mind beyond matter which we cannot know. He is personal. "Just the same line of thought which infers that God knows perfectly the world which we know imperfectly points to the belief that he possesses perfectly the personality which we possess imperfectly." ** And what are the marks of personality? They are, according to Rashdall: consciousness, thought, a degree at least of permanence or continuity, ability to distinguish between the person and the objects of his thought, and also the ability to distinguish between himself and other persons--the capacity for individuality, and a person must also have the ability to will or act. But on the basis of these distinctions personality is entirely a matter of degree and it is hard to say just where it begins. The simplest living organisms may possess these in degree. But if we add another element, that of morality, to the qualities of personality we definitely limit it. Morality, the ability to choose and to judge on the basis of value, is certainly not present in the lower animals and not in a very full sense in the higher animals. In man we find moral judgments very clearly present, but only in God does it reach perfection. For God "wills in accordance with the conception of an ideal end or good." *** God cannot fully know what he has never exper-

* Rashdall, "Philosophy of Religion" Ch.VIII, p. 376.
** Sturt, Ed.; "Personal Idealism." Ch. VIII, p. 376.
*** Ibid. p. 376.

although the proposition of one university mind in which God
has which all co-ordinate ecclesiastical forms exist and always have
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God is personal. Hegel's, however, refuses to think of God as an absence being beyond nature which we cannot know. He is personal. "Just the same line of thought which infers that God cannot perfectly be social when we know imperfectly points to the belief that he possesses perfectly the personality which we possess imperfectly." ** And with the matter of personality. They are, according to Hegel's conclusions, transcend, a degree or level of personality or rationality, reality is distinguish between the person and the objects of his account, and also the reality to distinguish between mind and man. Their persons--the capacity for intelligible, and a person must also have the ability to will or act. And on the basis of these distinctions personality is certainly a matter of degree and it is hard to say just where it begins. The religious living organisms may possess these in germ. But if an idea is one element, that of reality, to the qualities of personality we definitely think it. Rationality, the ability to choose and to judge on the basis of value, is certainly not present in the lower animals and not in a very full sense in the higher animals. In man we find moral judgments very clearly present, but only in God does it reach perfection. For God "acts in accordance with the conception of an ideal and so good." *** God alone fully knows what he has never experi-

* Hegel, "Philosophy of Religion" C. III, p. 270.
** Ibid., p. 271. "Personal Idealism." C. VIII, p. 72.
*** Ibid. p. 272.

ienced. Hence he must feel pleasure and pain; love good and hate evil; etc. "To be a self-conscious being, conscious of itself and other beings, thinking, willing, feeling, loving -- is what we mean by a person." * God is the perfection of imperfect human personality. "We know of no form of ultimately real being except the self. ... That being which is not <u>for</u> a self <u>is</u> a self." **

God is Creator

In his "Philosophy of Religion," Rashdall uses the arguments of cause and effect and of metaphysical unity to prove God's creatorship. All about us we see cause and effect. It is very hard for us to think of the world as coming out of nothingness without being willed or caused. "In the consciousness of our own activity (whereby we will a thing and the result follows) we get a direct experience of causality." *** Thus, as the mind which knows the universe, God is also it's cause.

Again "If God is thought of as linked by some inexplicable fate to a nature over which He has no sort of control ... we cannot be said to have reduced the world to a unity." **** We have thus a Wellsian situation with a world and a God neither of which explains the other. Rashdall says that such a world could have no purpose or rational end.

But Rashdall's real argument for God as Creator is based on his idealistic premise. On this basis he says "it will hardly be questioned that, if God wills, he must will all, or at least everything that is not willed by some lesser will ...

* Rashdall, "Philosophy of Religion." p. 55.
** Sturt, Op. Cit. Ch. VIII, p. 388.
*** Rashdall, "Philosophy of Religion." p. 41.
**** Ibid, p. 31.

lacked. Hence he must feel pleasure and doing love good and hate evil; also. "To be a self-conscious being, conscious of itself and other beings, thinking, willing, feeling, loving -- is what is meant by a person." * God is the perfection of these four personalities. "A God of no form of mind, merely real being cannot be self. ... That being which is not God is not God. It is a self." **

God is God. In his "Philosophy of Religion," Theobald Ziegler

> ... uses the arguments of cause and effect and of teleological unity to prove God's existence. All about us we see cause and effect. It is very easy for us to think of the world as coming out of nothingness without being willed or caused. "In the consciousness of our own activity (meaning our will & ideas and the results of our actions) we get a direct experience of causality." *** Then, in the mind which knows the universe, God is also its cause.

Again "If God is thought of as limited by some impossibility to a nature over which he has no sort of control ... he cannot be said to have created the world in a usual." Here he have thus a Theistic identification with a world and a God nature of which explains the other. Theobald says that such a world could have no purpose or rational end.

But Theobald's real argument for God as creator is based on his idealistic premise. On this basis he says "It will hardly be questioned that, if God wills, he must will all, or at least everything that is not willed by some lesser will ...

* Theobald. "Philosophy of Religion." p. 66.
** Ziegler, op. cit. Vol. I, p. 55.
*** Theobald. "Philosophy of Religion." p. 61.
**** Ibid., p. 61.

God must will the object of his own thought -- i.e. the world." * For surely, if the world does not exist apart from the mind which thinks it we must postulate that that mind also wills it. This is particularly true if we agree with Rashdall that thought without willing is an unthinkable abstraction. God is both Reason and Will, therefore God is Creator.

God is Creator, however, of more than the physical universe. Logic and the demand for unity also lead to the conclusion that human minds are derived from this Supreme Mind. If this were not so the terms "Supreme Mind" and "All-Knower" would be farcical. But human minds are limited by the matter of which they are not creators and God the Creator is not thus limited.

However, once He has created it, human self-consciousness is separate from God. However well I may know another person even in his inner life, he is always distinct from me. There is always a distinction between my experience and my knowledge of another's experience. God, who created us, must have an infinitely profounder knowledge of us than we have of each other, but still God and other selves are not identical.

God is Limited

This God who is Creator is not on that account unlimited. He is limited by his power, and in this limitation "lies the only solution of the problem of evil which does not either destroy the goodness of God or destroy moral distinctions altogether." ** As man is limited by his power so that he must sometimes cause pain as a means to a geater good, so God may be limited in his power so that he cannot evolve

* Sturt, Ed. "Personal Idealism" p. 377.
** Sturt, Ed. Op. Cit. ch. VIII, p. 391.

God made with the object of his own thought -- i.e., the world." - Now surely, if the world does not exist apart from the mind which thinks it, we must consistently deny that God also exists. This is particularly true if we agree with Berkeley that thought without willing is an unmistakable attribute. God is both Reason and Will, therefore God is Creator.

God is Creator, however, of more than the physical universe. Logic and the demand for unity also lead to the conclusion that human minds are derived from mind outside ourselves. If this were not so the words "Progress Blind" and "Will-Power" would be ironical. But human minds are limited by the matter of which they are not creators and God the Creator is now thus limited.

However, once He has created it, human self-consciousness is separate from God. However well I may know another person even if he lives life, he is always distinct from me. There is always a distinction between my experiences and my knowledge of another's experiences. God, who created us, must have an infinitely perfect knowledge of us than we have of each other, but still the soul cannot actually be identical.

God is ... This God who is Creator is not as that personal limited ... unlimited. He is limited by the power, and in this limitation lies the only existence of the problem of evil which does not either destroy the goodness of God or destroy moral distinctions altogether.[1] As man is limited by his power to, if he must consider come path as a means to a greater good, so God may be limited in his power so that he cannot avoid

[1] James, op. "Pragmatical Theism" ... cit., p. 277.
[2] Ibid., op. cit., ch. VIII, p. 301.

highly organized beings without a struggle for existence, or train human beings in unselfishness without allowing the existence of both sin and pain. If we postulate God's goodness (and this we must do if He is to be a God we can worship) and if we see Him as first cause (as the idealist position demands) then we must limit his power. For surely an all-powerful and good Being could have created a world where evil was not necessary to the attainment of His ideal.

God is also limited by his own nature which is moral and has no part in evil. The only solution for pain and sin in the universe is to suppose them means to a greater good. God, in his limited power, saw no other way to create growing moral beings than by means of pain and sin. Yet "a being who was obliged to create a world which did not seem to him good would be a blind force, ... not a rational Will." * Therefore this God who is limited by the goodness of his own nature must have seen the possibility of good conquering or he never would have created the world. Having created other thinking and willing selves, he now needs their aid to bring about the victory of the good.

God's final limitation is thus seen to be the other persons or selves in the universe, in so far as he is not those selves. Although he is ultimately responsible for their existence he is not now directly responsible for their acts. Hence sin and much pain may be the result of human free will rather than of God's will. God's good will and aim are very definitely limited by the cooperation or lack of it which he receives from other persons who are nevertheless his creatures.

* Rashdall; Op. Cit. p. 84.

Critical Appraisal

Taken as a whole I have very little unfavorable criticism of Rashdall's theory. I stated in my introduction that the existence of God in some form was to be presupposed. Therefore we need not discuss the pros and cons of the idealistic position as a basis for belief in God. Any system which is not pantheistic and which makes God the Creator must be in a degree, at least, idealistic. Mr. Rashdall has placed one limitation upon God which would not have been necessary according to our definition of the infinite which we said would mean no limitation save self-limitation. On this basis God's limitation due to his own nature would not be a limitation of his infinity.

One weakness which I feel in Mr. Rashdall's theory is that God is presented as imperfect in power yet static. Nowhere did he give me the impression of a God who was striving with men to overcome the limitation which was his as well as theirs. And to me it is here, more than in his good will or prophetic vision that we find hope that good may eventually conquer. God has not merely done the best which his limited power would allow and then left it up to mankind to carry on. He is striving with us for the victory which will be his as well as ours.

Chapter III

Reeman -- God of the Struggle

Reeman limits God more definitely than does either McConnell or Rashdall. But he keeps God as the Life Force of the universe and for this reason I have put him next in order even though James's conception seems to grant more opportunity for freedom of action to God. McConnell and Rashdall agree that since we as individuals cannot know anything beyond our own experiences, we must interpret God in the light of those experiences. This is true also of Reeman and of the men whom we will consider later. But as we move away from the Infinite we come more and more to a God who is not only interpreted through human experience, but limited by the limits of humanity. For Reeman God is limited almost as much as are men by the universe of which he is the life force.

God of the Struggle

Reeman sees God as the Life Force who brought forth the universe "as a means to his own self-expression, self-understanding, and self-realization." * He is not the Infinite First Cause of all things, but is "The eternal life force that has been working from the beginning." ** As the immanent life force God is revealed in the life of the universe as men are revealed in their acts. And as man's possibilities are judged by man at his best and not at his worst, so God is most truly revealed by his highest expression. God's greatness is not limited by the evil in the world so much as it is magnified by the good in the world. "It is a less impressive

* Reeman--E.H., "Do we need a new Idea of God?" p. 29.
** Ibid. p. 30.

Chapter III

Reason -- God or the Feeling

Reason limits God more definitely than does either Emerson or Mechdall. But he keeps God as the life force of the universe and for this reason I have put him next in order even though Emerson's conception seems to crush more opportunity for freedom of action on God. Mechdall and Mechdall agree that since we are individuals cannot know anything beyond our own experiences, we must interpret God in the light of those experiences. This is not also of Emerson and of the men whom we will consider later. But as we move away from the Infinite we come more and more to a God who is not only intuitively known through human experience, but limited by the limits of humanity. Man finally God is limited almost as much as are men by the universe of which he is the life force.

God of the Reason Emerson sees God as the Life Force. His brought forth

Forth the universe for a reason to his own self-expression, self-understanding, and self-realization." * He is not the Infinite First Cause of all things, but is "the eternal life force that has been working from the beginning." ** He the immanent life force God is revealed in the life of the universe as man was revealed in their note. But as man's possibilities are judged by man at his best and most of his world, so God is most truly revealed by his highest aspirations. God's greatness is not limited by the evil in the world but as much as it is magnified by the good in the world. "It is a less impressive

* Reason--E.E., 90; as need a low line of nature" p. 52.
** Ibid, p. 50.

fact for me that the struggle of the ages has been fierce and long than that out of it there have evolved a mind and a will in man that are able to mark its stages and that are capable at least of giving it some point and purpose," * (cf. Chapter II, p. 7 of this thesis.) But even though it may be less important than the good, evil exists, and exists glaringly. In the face of this Reeman limits God to the struggle for righteousness. "Since I cannot escape the thought of God and am compelled to believe that in the main humanity is not mistaken in its idea of goodness, and since I cannot believe that a God exists who is indifferent to creation and the interests of mankind, I am forced to the one conclusion left, namely, that God is actually now doing the best He can and can't do better, and that in all the struggle His interests are as much at stake as humanity's. I believe that if God could end such things as the horror of war and destroy the world's evil to-morrow He would, and the simple reason why He doesn't is that He can't. I can see nothing else to believe and still keep my rationality." ** We must moreover think of this struggle as "related to inevitable necessities in the divine being." *** To say that God chose this way when He had others to choose from because human freedom was worth the price does not satisfy Reeman. It was necessary to the very nature of God that free moral agents should exist. Since there was no other way, then God's struggle to make good victorious, becomes a glorious thing. "This means that we shall see in the sin and want and death that round us lie, not

* Ibid. p. 112.
** Ibid. p. 26.
*** Ibid. p. 127.

the marks of an ancient fall and the penalty of primal sin, but the task and challenge of advancing life and a new incentive to toil and acrifice of righteousness." *

In order to bring about His victory God needs the help of men, the highest expressions of the universe. The God of the struggle "fighting to win larger victories, toiling to bring into being a larger right than the world has ever yet known ... needs us and all the help we can give to the effort." ** This gives a real purpose to human life. We are here not only to save our own souls, but to help save the universe.

God not Transcendent

God is immanent in the world's life and not in any sense external to it, according to Reeman's view. Therefore prayers for divine help are useless. God is in the struggle and it is the purpose of human life to help him win that struggle, rather than to gain his aid in winning "a future heaven of idleness and selfishness for ourselves." *** God has no external control at all. Instead of a monarch ruling from a throne He is a toiler. I cannot see how, if God is completely bound by the struggle, He is more than a serf. What possible chance has He to overcome it? Men seem to have more freedom than God. Yet Reeman does not see this difficulty, but sees instead a "God dying thousand deaths daily and pouring out his life's blood unceasingly in the continuous struggle." **** All the anguish, pain, and effort of the struggle is God's own

* Ibid. p. 175.
** Ibid. p. 175.
*** Ibid. P. 179.
**** Ibid. P. 121.

anguish, pain, and effort." * Thus Reeman's conception is of a God who is the eternal life-force, striving unceasingly for the victory of good in the universe, and needing man's help to bring it about.

Critical Appraisal

I believe one weakness in Reeman's book is due to the time when it was written. He wrote during the world war, and apparently was convinced of the moral rightness of one side over the other. The result is what seems to me an undue criticism of monarchical terminology, and even, perhaps, an undue emphasis on the struggle. For Reeman the glory of the struggle overcomes any moral question raised by the problem of evil.

In his fear of monarchy Reeman has cut off all transcendence from God. He has tied him to the struggle as a serf is tied to his master's toil. Man is creator of his own acts, but though limited by them he can yet in measure rise above them. I cannot see why God <u>in</u> the struggle cannot also, in a degree at least control it. Prayer then is of value, in seeking God's aid that we may better fulfill his ends.

But in spite of what I consider his weakness, I believe that Reeman has made a real contributioon to the idea of God when he conceives him as an integral factor in the universe who is striving for its perfection, and particularly when he conceives of God himself as growing as he struggles.

* Ibid. p. 129.

Chapter IV

James -- Pragmatic View of God.

As a background for James' idea of God we must understand his basis for belief. He says "an idea is true so long as to believe it is profitable for our lives." * That is, it is true in so far forth as it is profitable. "The true is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief, and good, too, for definite, assignable reasons." ** He says that the theory of never believing a thing until you have proof may be good enough where it is possible. But there are many times in life when we must at least act as though we believed even though we do not have proof. Moral questions cannot be decided by science. Worths have to be decided by the heart. "If your heart does not want a world of metaphysical reality your head will never make you believe in one." *** But those things which our experiences show to be good, those things are true so far as we know truth. On this basis James makes two statements which he calls religious affirmations: 1. "The best things are the more eternal things." 2. "We are better off now if we believe the above to be true." **** We may, therefore, expect James' idea of God to be what he considers to be most worth while from the point of view of life as a whole, regardless of the philosophical or metaphysical implications which may result. Because he is not troubled with metaphysical

* James "Pragmatism" p. 75.
** Ibid. p. 76.
*** James "The Will to Believe" p. 23.
**** Ibid. p. 25, 26.

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* James "Pragmatism" p. 75.
** Ibid. p. 76.
*** James "The Will to Believe" p. 22.
**** Ibid. p. 25, 26.

problems James has not given God a definite place in the universe as creator or life force. God is there to give strength and power to men -- that is what really matters. As a result while God may not be limited in the purely spiritual realm He is far removed from the infinite Creator and Life-Giver.

Idea of God

"The drift of all the evidence we have seems to me to sweep us very strongly towards the belief in some form of superhuman life with which we may, unknown to ourselves, be co-conscious." * All intellectualist objections may be done away, but the empirical evidence remains. "I myself believe that the evidence for God lies primarily in inner personal experiences." ** The God so conceived cannot be definitely described. He may be either polytheistically or monotheistically conceived. If He is to satisfy the varying needs of each individual a single unified character cannot be made of Him. "The divine can mean no single quality, it must mean a group of qualities, by being champions of which in alternation, different men may all find worthy missions. Each attitude being a syllable in human nature's total message, it takes the whole of us to spell the meaning out completely." ***

"As long as we deal with the cosmic and the general, we deal only with the symbols of reality, but as soon as we deal with private and personal phenomena as such, we deal with realities in the completest sense of the term." **** Therefore

* Kallen - "Philosophy of Wm. James" p. 217.
** James "The Will to Believe" p. 109.
*** James "Varieties of Religious Experience p. 487.
**** Ibid. p. 498.

James casts off transcendental philosophies which make God the Creator who has set things going and now blandly watches his world work according to schedule. "Whatever sort of a being God may be, we know today that he is nevermore that mere external inventor of "contrivances" intended to make manifest the "glory" in which our grandfathers took such satisfaction." * The absolute can have no transactions with individuals, but only with the whole. But for James this is no sort of a God. God must be interested in things here and now.

There is more life in our total soul than we are at any one time aware of. It is this "more" which James uses as the beginning of his belief in God. "Let me propose, as an hypothesis, that whatever it may be on its farther side, the "more" with which in religious experience we feel ourselves connected is on its hither side the subconscious continuation of our conscious life. ... It is one of the peculiarities of invasions from the subconscious region to take on objective appearances and to suggest to the subject an external control. .. Since, on our hypothesis it is primarily the higher faculties of our own hidden mind which are controlling, the sense of union with the power beyond us is a sense of something, not merely apparently, but literally true." ** Thus far God would appear to be only a larger self whose objectivity is only in our own minds, and is there because we cannot comprehend the full meaning of our own subconscious minds. But God has also another side which

* Op. Cit. p. 74.
** Ibid. p. 512-513.

we know through experience and which logic cannot explain. When we commune with this unseen God, "work is actually done upon our finite personality for we are turned into new men, and consequences in the way of conduct follow in the natural world upon our regenerative change. But that which produces effects within another reality must be termed as a reality itself. .. God is real since he produces real effects. God's existence is the guarantee of an ideal order that shall be permanently preserved. This world may indeed, as science assures us, some day burn up or freeze; but if it is part of his order the old ideals are sure to be brought elsewhere to fruition, so that where God is, tragedy is only provisional and partial, and shipwreck and dissolution are not the absolutely final things." * Thus from a God who starts with our own "extra-marginal self" James grows to a conception of God as "world ruler." "This is a very considerable over-belief.... Most of us pretend in some way to prop it upon our philosophy, but the philosophy itself is really propped upon this faith." **

"What the more characteristically divine facts are, apart from the actual inflow of energy in the faith -- state and the prayer -- state, I know not. But the over-belief on which I am ready to make my personal venture is that they exist. The whole drift of my education goes to persuade me that the world of our present consciousness is only one out of many worlds of consciousness that exist, and that those other worlds must contain experiences which have meaning for our life also; and

* Op. Cit. p. 516-517.
** Ibid. p. 518.

that although in the main their experiences and those of this world keep discrete, yet the two become continuous at certain points, and the higher energies filter in. By being faithful in my poor measure to this over-belief, I seem to myself to keep more same and true."* "The believer is continuous, to his own consciousness at any rate, with a wider self from which saving experiences flow in. Those who have such experiences distinctly enough and often enough to live in the light of them remain quite unmoved by criticism, from whatever quarter it may come, be it academic or scientific, or be it merely the voice of logical common sense. They have had their vision and they know -- that is enough -- that we inhabit an invisible spiritual environment from which help comes, our soul being mysteriously one with a larger soul whose instruments we are." ** Belief in God becomes a matter of faith based upon personal experience.

God and the Absolute

We will now consider more concretely certain particulars of James' conception. First of all, he is very certain that God is not the Absolute. If we accept the Absolute, says James, we have to admit that everything is as He would have it. All is well for Him and his eternal way of thinking. But such a theory leaves finite beings to work out our own salvation, for all is surely not right for our finite standards. If we are to have a God at all his services "are needed in the dust of our human trials even more that his dignity is needed in the empyrean." ***

* Op. Cit. p. 519.
** James "A pluralistic Universe." p. 308.
*** James "Pragmatism" p. 72.

that although in his own daily experiences God above of this world seems distorted, yet the two become reconciled at certain points, and the higher emerges fitting in. By being faithful in my poor measure in this "over-belief," I come to speak to God, more than not know.* When believer is continuous, in his own consciousness at any rate, with a higher self from which motive experiences flow in. Those who have such experiences sufficiently enough and often enough to live in the light of them really quite unmoved by criticism, from whatever quarter it may come, be it scientific or evangelic, or be it merely the voice of logical common sense. They have had their vision and they know -- that is enough -- that we should be invisible spiritual environment from which body comes, one can deal, metaphorically one with a larger soul whose innermost is are." ** Belief in God becomes a matter of faith based upon personal experience.

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* Op. Cit. p. 519.
** James "A Pluralistic Universe." p. 308.
*** James "Pragmatism" p. 75.

The logical corollary to absolutism is determinism which leads to individual indifferentism. The world will be saved. Why, then should we as individuals worry about it. But if we have many forces at work we have no assurance of salvation save as our united efforts bring it about. In absolutism there is one All-Knower. But under pluralism there are many knowers and the greatest knower of all may not yet know the whole of everything, or may not know what he does know at a single stroke. This theory not only limits God's knowledge, but also his power. Yet it saves his morality and James agrees with McConnell that that must be the fundamental quality of God. "The only way to escape from the paradoxes and perplexities that a consistently thoughtout and monistic universe suffers from -- the problem of evil in short -- is to be frankly pluralistic and assume that the superhuman consciousness, however vast it may be, has itself an external environment, and consequently is finite." * God is finite either in power or in knowledge or in both at once. "Beyond each man and in a fashion continuous with him there exists a larger power which is friendly to him and to his ideals. All that the facts require is that the power should be both other and larger than our conscious selves. Anything larger will do, if only it be large enough to trust for the next step. It need not be infinite, it need not be solitary. It might conceivably be only a larger and more godlike self of which the present self would then be but the mutilated express-

* Op. City. "Pluralistic Universe" p. 310-11.

ion, and the universe might conceivably be a collection of such selves, of different degrees of inclusiveness with no absolute unity realized in it at all." * A pluralistic conception of some sort is necessary to meet the pragmatic conception of truth, for only with the idea of the Many rather than the One does the right action on the part of individuals really matter. If God is not absolute, right action on the part of individuals can and does effect the progress of the universe. Moreover, according to the pluralistic belief "who knows whether the faithfulness of individuals here below to their own poor over-beliefs may not actually help God in turn to be more effectively faithful to his own greater tasks?" **

God and Free Will

Belief in a finite God leads inevitably to belief in free will. A belief in determinism lends stability to the world. We know then that whatever happens should be so and even though we cannot understand we believe that eventually all will be right. Belief in free will does away with this peace but it adds to individual dignity and importance. But the real value of free will is that it means "novelties in the world, the right to expect that in its deepest elements, as well as in its surface phenomena, the future may not identically repeat and imitate the past... it holds up improvement as at least possible." *** To me this leads to a greater ideal of God than does McConnell's idea that God chose the present universe with its laws as the best possible way to make and save men. I agree with James that "We can with difficulty comprehend the character of a cosmic mind whose purposes

* Op. Cit. "varieties of Religious Experience" p. 525.
** Ibid p. 159.
*** James "Pragmatism" p. 119.

are fully revealed by the strange mixture of goods and evils that we find in this actual world's particulars." * It seems a strange God who would plan an eruption of Vesuvius as part of his design.

God more than Matter

"The notion of God...has this practical superiority over (the ideas of mechanical philosophy), it guarantees an ideal order that shall be permanently preserved." ** Material things may perish but God is bound to bring ideals to fruition somewhere, somehow, for ideals are the most worthwhile things we know. "Materialism means simply the denial that the moral order is eternal, and the cutting off of ultimate hopes; spiritualism means the affirmation of an eternal moral order and the letting loose of hope." *** On such a definition spiritualism and not materialism meets the pragmatic test of truth. "Give us a matter that promises success, that is bound by its laws to lead our world ever nearer to perfection, and any rational man will worship that matter." ****

Critical Appraisal of James.

James definitely states that God is not the sort of Creator who has made a universe, wound it up and left it to run. There is nothing to lead me to believe that James thinks of God as Creator at all. Yet his God is very definitely more than Collective Mind as we shall find Reese interpreting that conception. Although James finds the "hither side of God in our subconscious selves the "farther" side as expressed in his "over-belief" is surely much more.

* Op. Cit. "Pragmatism" p. 113.
** Ibid. p. 106.
*** Ibid. p. 107.
**** Ibid. p. 102.

His approach to God, and his experience of what God can mean to individual lives, I find to be essentially my own. But unless God be Creator or collective mind I cannot grasp his connection with the universe. To be sure James does not state as Wells does that "God comes we know not whence." I am inclined to believe that James would agree with Alexander that God is the next step. "Anything larger will do, if only it be large enough to trust for the next step." * I disagree with James as to what is "large enough to trust for the next step." The God in whom I trust must be an objective reality more than my enlarged self. He must be as real as any other person but must have a power over the universe which only a free creator could have. His power and knowledge may both be limited, but I cannot believe that free personalities, whether human or superhuman grow out of an impersonal universe. If God is ultimate then he must be creator. I do not find such a belief expressed or implied in James's theory. He seems entirely untroubled by metaphysical problems.

Op. Cit. p. 107.

Chapter V

Schiller -- Humanist Conception of God

Schiller is an admirer of, and in some respects a follower of, James, but he calls his philosophy "humanism" rather than "pragmatism." Humanism he defines as "the philosophic attitude which, without wasting thought upon attempts to construct experience a priori, is content to take human experience as the clue to the world of human experience."* On the basis of human experience Schiller believes in a force apparently apart from the individual which influences individual behavior. Yet experience does not point to the existence of this force apart from our knowing of it. This force which we call God affects individual minds and is affected by them, yet does not have meaning except as it is known by those minds. Here we have a limited God indeed; one who is limited by the universe to be sure; and more, one who is not an objective reality.

Idea of Reality

Schiller has no use for the Absolute. Even though it existed it could have no value for us, so why believe in it? He says the Absolute is "the death of morals. The idea of the Absolute whole cannot be rendered compatible with the antithetical valuations which form the vital atmosphere of human agents. ... In the Absolute all moral distinctions, must, like all others, be swallowed up and disappear." **(c.f. James, p. 37 of this thesis) As experience is the basis for judging truth it must also be the means of

* Schiller, F.C.S. "Humanism" p. XIX
** Schiller Op. Cit. pp. 2-3.

finding reality. The real has meaning for us only as we know it or experience it and we cannot experience the absolute. What it is like apart from our knowing of it we cannot even speculate. "We must discard the notion that ... Reality is what it is whatever we may do. It is true on the contrary that our action is essential and indispensable, that to some extent the world (our world) is of our making, and that without us nothing is made that is made." * "We come in contact with reality only in the act of knowing or experiencing it. As unknowable, therefore, the Real is nil, as unknown it is only potentially real. The situation therefore in no wise sanctions the assumption that what the Real is in the act of knowing, it is also outside that relation. .. When the mind knows reality both are affected. ... I can see no reason why the view that reality exhibits a rigid nature unaffected by our treatment, should be deemed theoretically more justifiable than its converse, that it is utterly plastic to our every demand. ... The actual situation is, of course, a case of interaction, a process of cognition in which the "subject" and "object" determine each other, and both "we" and "reality" are involved." ** Therefore, although Reality is meaningless apart from human knowing of it, and though it is affected by human knowledge, it is somehow distinct from that knowledge. But this possible unknown Reality has no value for us. "The fact is that the conception of ultimate reality looks forward and not back.... We can conceive ourselves as getting an answer about the begin-

* Schiller "Studies in Humanism" p. 12.
** Schiller Op. Cit. p. 11.

ning of the world process only at the end. And it will be no wonder if by that time we should have grown too wise and too well satisfied to want to raise the question." * It is what reality means to our lives here and now that really matters.

The idea of Reality as God comes in answer to the demand for "something to respond to the outcry of the human heart." ** The idea of God means "(a) a human moral principle of Help and Justice; and (b) an aid to the intellectual comprehension of the universe." *** Among the agents of creation "there may be a being (or perhaps more than one) so vastly more important than ourselves that his part in the shaping of reality may have been so preponderant as almost to warrant our hailing him as "Creator."**** But having magnanimously admitted this for any who wish so to believe Schiller states as his own belief that "The way to satisfy what is legitimate in the demand (for God) is, not by conceiving an original fact, but by conceiving a final satisfaction." *****

The real meaning of God for Schiller is that he is the "unity of the universe." ****** Each individual sees this reality in different terms, "as what he has it in him to perceive, and variously transfigures what, without his vision were an unseen void." ******* Individuality is a varying and a growing quantity which is never fully developed. But it is much more real than any abstract universal which we may set up. Therefore the real must be thought of in terms of individual-

* Ibid. p. 436.
** Ibid. p. 136.
*** Ibid. p. 286.
**** Ibid. p. 447.
***** Ibid. p. 437.
****** Schiller; "Problems of Belief" p. 145.
******* Schiller; "Humanism" p. 16.

ring of the world produces only at the end. And it will be no wonder if by that time we should have grown too wise and too well satisfied to want to raise the question." * It is not reality being so our life here and now that "really matters".

The idea of Reality as God comes in answer to the demand for "something to respond to the entirety of the human heart." ** The idea of God means "(a) a human moral principle of life and duties; and (b) an aid to the intellectual comprehension of the universe." *** Among the ways of creation "there may be a being (or perhaps more than one) who really more important than ourselves but his part in the drama of reality may have been so preponderant as almost to warrant our holding him as "Creator." But having reasonably established this for any who wish to believe doubtfully another reason is his own belief that "the way to reality that is depicted in the Bible (for God) is, not by conceiving an original fact, but by conceiving a final satisfaction." ****

The real meaning of God for Schiller is that he is the "unity of the universe." ***** Each individual has this reality in different degree, "as much as he has it is him to perceive, and variously to manifestation that, without his vision were an unseen void." ****** Individuality is everything and a growing quantity which is never fully developed. But it is much more real than any abstract universal which we may set up. Therefore the real must be thought of in terms of individual-

* Ibid. p. 278.
** Ibid. p. 128.
*** Ibid. p. 208.
**** Ibid. p. 247.
***** Ibid. p. 247.
****** Schiller: "Problems of Belief" p. 1st.

ity, and "We must learn to think of the individuality of the real.... not as completed being, but as a becoming, i.e. as being a process." * The belief that reality is a process and not static, plus the belief that it is reshaped by our knowledge and acts result in an ethical situation with a prospect of betterment. The salvation of the world depends upon the striving of individuals.

Critical Appraisal

God as "the unity of the universe" seems at first glance to be related to Alexander's conception that "God is the universe with a nisus toward deity." But upon closer examination a great difference is seen. For Schiller the unity is no more than that which somehow unites the knowledge of individuals so that knowledge can be shared, but for Alexander God is an objective ideal to which we are always striving.

As we have seen, Schiller speaks of both "we" and "reality," but if reality does not exist apart from our knowing of it I cannot see how it is as real as the knowers. In common with the others whom we have studied, Schiller insists upon the moral quality of reality. But according to his definition of Reality, its morality I should think would be as varied as that of individuals. There is here nothing "to respond to the outcry of the human heart", and I am ready to agree with Wells in at least this one point, that in the individual good will we have no assurance of permanent good. Of course, we as individuals cannot grasp a moral order beyond our present experience, so that our present standards cannot be held to be ultimate.

* Ibid. p. 124

But if a good God exists whom I can know more and more fully as I discover his likeness, there is a real source of help and an inspiration to bring his way to pass -- to bring in the "kingdom." Whereas a God who is shaped by my acts may be an interesting piece of creativity, but is not a real help.

Chapter VI

Reese -- Humanist Conception of God.

Although he calls his philosophy "Humanism", Reese's idea is very different from Schiller's. Schiller says that apart from human knowing of it, Reality is meaningless, but he is not ready to say that it cannot be an objective reality. And he feels the need of "something to respond to the outcry of the human heart." Reese, however, sees no need of anything beyond man's ideal of the fullest development of himself and the race. Since he does not really accept a belief in God, he really has no place in this thesis, but I have included him to illustrate how far the limitation of God can be carried without being classed as completely atheistic.

Reese -- God not Necessary

Reese states with great assurance that science has found the universe to be a self-operating system. It finds ordinary cosmic events and processes, routine and impersonal, and other things cared for by highly specialized parts of nature such as man. It regards order and purpose as self existent. With such a foundation for belief there is no place for God. "Religion symbolizes the human quest to discover in the nature of man and the universe the kind of life that is inherently desirable, and to enlist in its behalf all instrumentalities, both human and cosmic that are capable of assisting in its realization." * There is no basis in this modern religion for faith in and response to the super-human; it is based on the complete and permanent satisfactions of human life. "Liberalism is building a religion

* Reese; "Humanism" pp. 21-22.

that would not be shaken even if God were outgrown." * The liberal recognizes that purposive and powerful cosmic processes are operative and that man is increasingly able to co-operate with them and in a measure control them. Reese says that some may call these processes God, but he is willing to leave off the label. "The abiding spiritual reality is human worthfulness." ** As a natural result of such a belief he says that "The principal agent in the remaking of a human being is his own will." ***

Morality is fundamental even in this philosophy. "The object of humanistic religion is the enhancement of the human estate. The chief end of man is to build towering personality and to direct it into ways of complete living.

"Worthy living, unconquerable loyalty to noble purposes, sympathy unrimmed by class or creed or race -- these are the pillars and the pinacle of religion." **** The interesting, and to me strange, part of this theory is that the attainment of such an ideal is to be realized only through the freedom of mankind from super-orders, God included. "Thus far there is not a shred of competent evidence in regard to the nature and purpose of ultimate reality." ***** Since he has no proof of anything higher Reese has left the human mind as the sole spiritual reality. This is a finite God indeed.

* Ibid. p. 62.
** Ibid. p. 63.
*** Ibid. p. 50.
**** Ibid.p. 17-20.
***** Ibid. p. 4.

Critical Appraisal

Reese considers "human worthfulness" the "abiding spiritual reality." But since man also has many evil qualities what is to help him to overcome these if there is no power beyond himself? Even Schiller admits of a Reality which shapes us even as we shape it, but Reese professes complete ignorance of any reality beyond the human mind. If such reality there be, it means nothing to him. My answer to this is based on his own arguments for the validity of experience, as well as on my belief in what makes a coherent philosophy. I know in my own life that a spiritual reality other than myself functions. And my reason tells me that a world such as we have with human minds included, is not a mere happenstance of an impersonal order. Science does not prove to me that the universe is a self-operating system. Reese may be logical if we grant his starting point, an impersonal order. I disagree with this. But even though science told me that the universe was impersonal I would <u>know</u> that it is not, just as we know that God is good even in the face of evil in the world.

Chapter VII

H. G. Wells -- God, the Invisible King

Without labeling his method pragmatic, Wells has, nevertheless, worked out his theory along the lines which have the most practical meaning for him. He has not followed any definite philosophical system and, therefore, he is hard to label. As the attempts of one individual, and a keen-minded one at that, to work out a religious system which he believes could be universal, it is worth notice.

Idea of God

In his introduction to "God the Invisible King" Mr. Wells states his idea of God to be "Complete agnosticism in the matter of God the Creator and entire faith in the matter of God the Redeemer."* He may not know much more than we do of the ways and means of Creation for he had nothing to do with it. "He comes, we know not whence into the conflict of life. .. He has begun and he will never cease." **

God is no more the Life Force than he is a creator. The Life Force is responsible for the ugly and the lovely, the harmful and the good in life. God is not responsible for either, but he utilizes the lovely and the good in man.

This God, who "comes we know not whence" is a person. Man knows this by experience, by the absolute certainty that one is not alone in oneself. "It is as if one was touched at every point by a being akin to oneself, sympathetic, beyond measure

* Wells, H.G.; "God the Invisible King" p. XII.
** Op. Cit. p. 18.

wiser, steadfast, and pure in aim. It is completer and more intimate, but it is like standing side by side with and touching someone that we love very dearly and trust completely. It is as if this being bridged a thousand misunderstandings and brought us into fellowship with a great multitude of other people."* As a person God is of the nature of thought and will. He has not a material body. "With our eyes he looks out upon the universe he invades; with our hands he lays hands upon it. ... He is the undying human memory, the increasing human will." ** Yet God does not thus become Collective Mind; he is a being in himself and is more than what human beings contribute to him, just as man is more than the sum of the cells in his body or as England is more than her land. "And so we think of God as synthetic reality, though he has neither body nor material parts. And so too, we may obey him and listen to him, though we think but lightly of the men whose hands or voices he sometimes uses. And we may think of him as having moods and aspects as a man has -- and a consistency we call his character." ***

But the personal God of Mr. Wells is not nearly so clearly defined a person as is the God interpreted by McConnell or Rashdall. He has tried to make him objective but I am not sure that his "synthetic reality" is personal at all. God not only is not Creator or Life Force, but neither does he seem to

* Op. Cit. p. 232.
** Op. Cit. p. 61.
*** Op. Cit. p. 63.

be a creature. He is a unique existence which Mr. Wells says is a person. But how God can be an objective fact, a person in the universe, yet not have a definite relationship to it is hard for me to understand. For Mr. Wells'God has the character and attributes of a person, but has not the power of individual action. Men are the channels through which he works. According to Webster a person is the "spontaneous energy of thought evolving itself in products." I doubt if Mr. Wells' God fulfills the latter part of this definition.

As a person Mr. Wells gives God the characteristics of courage; youth, as symbolized by growth, the forward look; and love as an exaltation out of self, a complete and generous fellowship. God needs man to bring in his kingdom as a captain needs his men to attain a victory. As a captain is nothing without his company so God is nothing without mankind.

Though he does not exist in matter or space, God exists in time just as thought may do. Somewhere in the dawning of mankind he had a beginning, an awakening, and as mankind grows he grows. This growing God increases in moral power as man does. "God who is himself finite, who himself struggles in his great effort from strength to strength has no spite against error." * But he helps mankind to overcome evil. (Can Mr. Wells thus easily do away with any problem of evil and its overcoming?) God is so limited that he does not even fully apprehend the end toward which he is aiming. As time goes on he will apprehend it more fully. At present he seeks his aim as the

* Op. Cit. p. 24.

overcoming of death or evil. For more knowledge and power God ... "must use human eyes and hands and brains." * This idea may stimulate the need for man's moral activity, but I fail to see it as a truly personal ideal of God.

Why have a God

As Mr. Wells tells us why to believe in God he is more of a religionist than a philosopher, I believe. There are benevolent atheists who believe that in man there is a "good-will" which causes him to live individually and socially on a high level. Since he lives in society he finds it better if he is thoughtful of and helpful towards others. Why, if the very conditions of life bring him to such an attitude, does he need a God? Mr. Wells has his answer ready. The man suggested stands alone "upon his own good will, without a reference, without a standard, trusting to his own impulse to goodness, relying upon his own moral strength." ** It may be that there is a certain glory in this ideal of personal nobility; but Mr. Wells suggests that it smacks even more of priggishness. The world as we know it is full of temptations to anti-social conduct as well as to this fine social relationship. If a man's goodness depends only on his inner good-will there is a great danger that he may fall. He not only has no God, but no living link with other men of good-will. The man who believes in God, on the other hand, has completely turned away from self and derives his assurance from God who also unites him with other men working for the same ideal.

* Op. Cit. p. 99.
** Wells, H.G.; "God the Invisible King", p. 83.

"This goodness that I thought was within me and of myself, and upon which I rather prided myself, is without me, and above myself, and infinitely greater and stronger than I. It is the immortal and I am mortal. ... I have come under a divine imperative, I am obeying an irresistible call, I am a humble and willing servant of the righteousness of God."* But God does not only furnish this "divine imperative"; he <u>responds</u> to our need and <u>gives</u> us power to overcome our weakness. He is an active factor.

How to find God

Mr. Wells does not seek to present logical or rational proof for his God. He says there are men who are constantly seeking God by logic. They sit at desks away from life with its practical need for God and rack their brains to find a proof for him or to meet objections to him. "They weave spider-like webs of muddle and disputation across the path by which men come to God." ** But, "If you do not feel God then there is no persuading you of him." *** First one must feel the need of God and then form or receive an adequate and acceptable idea of him. If we search within for God presently we shall find him and know that he is real. The sense of God is the attainment of an absolute certainty that one is not alone in oneself. After this experience one's life is changed. One is assured that there is a power that fights with him against the confusion and evil within and without. All of the arguments in the world can neither in-

* Op. Cit. pp. 84-85.
** Op. Cit. p. 29.
*** Ibid. p. 98.

crease nor lessen this assurance. This may not be of any use to a skeptic, but it is the only way to God which Mr. Wells offers.

God, the Invisible King

Once we have truly experienced God we must take him into our daily living; we must be changed beings. God is the Invisible King whose goodness must be expressed in every phase of our daily living. "There is no act altogether without significance, no power so humble that it may not be used for or against God, no life but can orient itself to him." * Acceptance of God is not a mere intellectual or emotional decision; it must mean a conversion of life so that the complete life is turned to God's way. It means an incessant watching of one's self. One who is God's must be free of prejudice, carefully truthful, a worker, not a drone, clean and clear-minded. "These are daily fundamental duties that everyone who comes to God will, as a matter of course, set before himself." ** Moreover, in giving myself to God, I become, in a measure, responsible for all the evil in the world. I become my brother's keeper and the final victory of good is partly dependent on me. These things must be true of God's followers because they are true of God.

Though one is thus changed by knowing God, he cannot infer that God's way is a cut and dried one. God himself is not sure in advance of every step of the way. His ideal is the overcoming of death in all of its forms. The death of progress due to

* Op. Cit. p. 101.
** Op. Cit. p. 107.

prejudice, hatred, and fear is as great a danger as the death of the race and is just as important to overcome. Thus the great aim appears to be the conquest of death that victorious living may go on. How this is to be accomplished God knows very little, if any, better than we do. However, Mr. Wells is convinced that this conquest comes, not through suffering, yielding, submission, but through fighting. Jesus on the cross is a saint of non-resistance, but not the ideal. "We of the new faith repudiate non-resistance. We are the militant followers of a militant God. ... Submission is the remotest quality of all from our God." * Thus the followers of God are to be completely free from prejudice and superstition, yet militant.

God is Universal

Mr. Wells has set forth his ideal not merely as his own philosophy, but as a basis for religious unification whereby all may come to God. To the mass of men he says "This is the God it has always been in your nature to apprehend." ** Many are so steeped in superstitions, fears, or creeds that they seem to have shut themselves off from the light. But we must remember that religion is not essentially mental and therefore all may have at least some glimpse of the truth of God.

Critical Appraisal of Above Theory

For me, Mr. Wells has at times reached religious heights, but at other times he seems to have lowered the ideal to the level of our present understanding. There are also times when I question the soundness

* Op. Cit. p. 103.
** Op. Cit. p. 137.

of his reasoning. I can understand Mr. Wells' belief in a moral God who thinks and wills the good, and who with greater wisdom strength and love than man has, helps us onward. My experience assures me of this as Mr. Wells's does. To me the weakness of Mr. Wells's system is in his failure to make God a necessary part of the universe. He came into it, we know not whence, when, nor how. Why then can we suppose that he is as vitally interested as the theory proposes in the growth to perfection of this thing with which he has no vital connection? That a God who is working out his own salvation through his imperfect creation should care deeply for its best welfare I can understand. But I do not see how Mr. Wells can feel such assurance that this being would care so deeply for a creation foreign to himself. It seems to me that such a God would be like Mathew Arnold's earth maiden who married a merman. But her earth world called, and though she loved her adopted people of the sea the ties of kinship were stronger and she returned to it "leaving lonely forever the kings of the sea." Would not a God who has no inherent relation to the universe or to life be apt to be as faithless as the maiden? How does Mr. Wells know that God will never return whence he came? I can see no coherence, no real basis for faith in such an erratic being, neither creator nor creature of this universe. Humanism with its God of the social mind seems to me a more reasonable foundation for my faith than the one here given.

Also, I cannot see why God's wisdom should be so limited that he does not even fully understand his own end. I can see

how his power is limited and his knowledge of what man's co-operation will be. But he may have a very clear ideal even though he does not understand just how it is to be brought about.

Again I object to his concept of a militant God. Mr. Wells is a historian. Does not his history show him that in the long run it is not the militant, but the outwardly yielding, forces which have conquered spiritually? Early Christianity was not militant and it conquered by its spiritual force. It was when it became militant that it lost its spiritual glory and chose asceticism as the only means of regaining God. Throughout history the Chinese, in yielding to their military conquerors have conquered them culturally and spiritually. Mr. Wells says "A Christianity which shows for its daily symbol, Christ risen and trampling victoriously upon a broken cross would be far more in the spirit of our worship." * Does not "Christ risen" imply Christ crucified? The living Christ is glorious because he overcame by spiritual power the death which militant force led him to.

* Op. Cit. p. 103.

CONCLUSION

Summary In the preceding study we have found several solutions to the problem of God. We have seen the idea of the Infinite Creator made finite so that God is limited by his creation, particularly by human free-will; so that he is limited by his power which is not infinite; and so that he is limited in creation to the life force of the universe, and is consequently committed to st ruggle. We have also seen the conception of the Infinite Ideal made finite so that God is interpreted in terms of the highest meaning to human life here and now; or is even so limited that he becomes no more than the human ideal. And, finally, we have discussed an idea of God which seems totally unrelated to the universe, yet which, in the mind of its creator, is objectively real.

Reese appears to be more concerned with glorifying man, than with the character of spiritual reality. But in every other case the limitation of God has grown out of the desire to preserve God's morality. If we are to believe in a God at all he must be good. This is the refrain of every theory. But each man takes a different way to explain the apparent paradox of a good God with the facts of the universe as we see them.

McConnell accounts for sin on the basis of human free-will, and answers the problem of evil in the physical realm only by a faith that God knows why he chose this way. His solution is practically the same as Joyce's. Rashdall limits God's power and believes that God chose the only way possible for him. This

of course, brings up the question of what could limit a creator God's choice, but puzzles Rashdall less than any other way of accounting for evil does. Reeman finds God struggling to overcome evil, and needing human efforts to insure his victory. James, Schiller, and Wells each in his own way, do away with God as Creator and by a pluralism more definite than that of the previous men, relieve God of responsibility for evil, although they will admit his desire to overcome or to help men to overcome evil.

My Personal Belief

Since the doctors disagree I have decided to mix my own prescription. Reese, and even Schiller have too little beyond the human to be of any aid to me, for my logic and experience both tell me that there is more. Wells I disregard for myself because he sounds too much like a quack. His prescription is supposed to be a universal remedy, but it has no sound basis. For me God must have some connection with this universe if he is to exist at all. But though I have prepared a prescription which I am willing to live by for the present, I do not guarantee that it is permanent.

In the first place I am willing to accept with James the pragmatic basis for judging truth, and to believe that idea of God which has the most worth for my life. But my reason also enters in and says that a theory without any logical basis is not worthful. I believe in God as personal because I have experienced his strength and helpfulness in my own life,and also

with McConnell, because I cannot account for the personality in the universe if God be impersonal. I believe in God as good because my whole being rebels at anything else, and because I cannot account for the presence of good otherwise. I accept good as the essential and evil as the accident in the universe because good is of more worth.

I believe that God is creator and is still creating; is immanent and yet transcendent. McConnell says that a moral God must have faced the consequences of his act and still he believes that God deliberately chose our present universe as the best way. I would rather limit God's freedom as Reeman does and say that creation was a necessity of God's nature and this growing universe is the result of God's best efforts which are still being put forth. I believe that God is creator because any other sort of objective God seems to me a freak in the universe. The God who answers my need must be large enough, not only for the next step, but to give some assurance of permanent helpfulness. God did not create a machine which he has now left running. He began a creative process which he has been seeking to perfect ever since. I believe that he is more than the power behind a machine; he is also the personal director. I do not believe that God is more limited than his free agents, and if we can direct and control nature to our ends I believe that God can do likewise. I firmly believe that if an individual constantly seeks through knowledge and prayer to find God's way and to do it, that God gives extraordinary power and insight to that individual. Perhaps this

means, as Reeman believes, that God's creativity is limited to the Life-Force of the Universe rather than that he is ultimate First Cause. But I do not believe with Reeman that God is limited to the struggle. If he is the Life-Force God is in the struggle, but he can also rise above it. I believe God can bring about new conditions without breaking laws to do it. Because I believe in God's ability to do things I believe in prayer which increases the possibility of cooperation between God and man and opens new doors for God's activity.

Having admitted God's limitation of power at the start I must add the belief that he is growing. Thus any victory of good becomes God's victory drawing him that much nearer to his ideal. But I do not see that limitation in God's power limits his goodness. His choice has newer been for the lower, but his limited power has made it impossible to bring moral beings into existence without a struggle.

Finally, I believe that in Jesus we see the human ideal. In his spirit I see the character of God revealed and I see what a God-filled life can really be. In Jesus I see the finest expression of God's creatorship. If God could develop the Christ from one life yielded completely to his way I have faith that he can do it again in other lives so yielded, and I believe it is to such an end that he is striving.

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